

My name is Leslie Blatteau. I have been a resident of New Haven, Connecticut for 23 years. I have been a public school teacher in New Haven for the past nine years. I want to share my recent experience as evidence for why Paid Family and Medical Leave works and why the General Assembly should vote yes to Senate Bill 221.

As a result of my accumulated contractual paid sick days, I was able to take 12 weeks paid leave after the birth of my daughter in November. The benefits of this paid leave are immeasurable. Without the stress of worrying about a paycheck, I could completely focus on my recovery and my infant daughter's needs. I brought her to appointments with ease, regularly attended a breastfeeding support group, and enjoyed the important bonding time that benefits families both short-term and long-term. Just last week I returned to work and as a result of 12 weeks paid maternity leave, I felt ready to meet the needs of my students and begin teaching again. In fact, my productivity will increase as a result of my paid leave. I feel rested and secure in my bond with my daughter; thus, I can better do my job.

Unfortunately, most parents do not have the opportunity to take this amount of leave after the birth or adoption of a child. Often, they have to scramble back to work far too soon or take a leave, only to be unpaid. The stress of caring for a young child and not being able to pay regular bills cannot be overstated. The best way to address this problem and meet the needs of families is to pass Paid Family and Medical Leave.

I believe Connecticut can continue to be a leader on this important issue by passing Paid Family and Medical Leave. In the tradition of Family & Medical Leave, as well as paid sick days, Senate Bill 221 is the next logical step. Let's set a tone for the rest of the country by supporting workers and families and passing this bill.

Lastly, the biggest concern regarding Paid Leave in this economic climate is the cost. But let's remember that this system will be fully funded by employees with no employer contribution. The cost to employees will be one half of one percent of our income. A small price to pay for the financial security and peace of mind that comes with Paid Family and Medical Leave. Thank you for your time and support of this bill.

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